

ITINERARY
FRANCE'S LOIRE VALLEY: BIRDS, CHATEAUX & WINE
June 1-11, 2025



The Black Redstart is a small flycatcher that is common in France. This species prefers rocky areas, and can often be seen in towns as well as the countryside. Photograph by guide Marcelo Padua.

We include here information for those interested in the 2025 Field Guides France's Loire Valley: Birds, Chateaux and Wine tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited on the tour
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our website)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing for and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen on the tour

French novelist Gustave Flaubert once described the Loire as "the most sensual river in France," and that description is still apt today. Europe's only "wild" river — the only one without a lock or weir or dam anywhere along its length — the Loire is France's longest waterway, winding northward and westward from the Massif Central through the flat, fertile lowlands of central France to the Atlantic.

Our tour concentrates on the "Middle Loire," famous for its spectacular chateaux, which have housed the country's royalty, rich, and famous since the Middle Ages. The Loire Valley is also famous for its wines; it's France's third-largest wine-producing region, with 100 appellations from source to sea. We'll intersect with some of its best-known regions, and we'll have the chance to sample Chinon, Vouvray, Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé, and more.

During the time of our tour, the Loire runs low and sedate, studded with sand and gravel bars that provide protected nesting areas for Yellow-legged, Black-headed and Mediterranean gulls, Little Ringed Plovers, and Common Sandpipers. The mixed deciduous forests along its fringes are home to Eurasian Green, Great Spotted and Middle Spotted woodpeckers, Song and Mistle thrushes, Great, Crested, Marsh, Eurasian Blue, and Long-tailed tits, and many others.

In scattered grasslands among the farm fields and vineyards, we'll look for Corn Bunting, Eurasian Skylark, European Stonechat, Eurasian Thick-knee, Montagu's Harrier, and — if we're very lucky — some of the region's last remaining pairs of Little Bustard. We'll spend time in the Sologne and Brenne, two regions where hundreds of small lakes, carved from the landscape by industrious local residents more than six centuries ago, shelter Great Crested, Eared, and Little grebes, Tufted Duck and Common Pochard. Egrets and herons stalk the lake margins while Eurasian Golden-Orioles and Common Nightingales chortle from surrounding vegetation, and Whiskered Terns zoom back and forth overhead.

We'll spend our mornings in the field and shift our attention to chateaux, abbeys, and vineyards on most afternoons. Two comfortable hotels and relatively short drives should combine to make for a pleasant and relaxing holiday!



Chateau Chambord is the largest of the chateaux that we'll visit. Photograph by participant Carol Meyer.

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

Physical requirements of this tour

- **TRAILS & WALKING:** Moderate amounts of rather easy walking (up to 3 miles per day), some of it on roads, some on good trails. Most trails are flat, but a few have steeper sections, especially near river edges. To visit all areas of the various chateaux requires an ability to climb steps.
- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We do spend a bit of time standing to watch birds on this tour; a small folding stool can provide relief as needed. Most roads are paved, but access to some spots entails travel along unpaved tracks that may be bumpy and/or dusty.
- **PACE:** On some days, there will be optional pre-breakfast outings from the lodgings (generally starting at 6:00, though occasionally earlier), with breakfasts served as late as 8:00 a.m. After a picnic or café lunch, on most days, we'll shift focus to vineyards or chateaux.

- **WEATHER:** Early summer weather in the Loire Valley is generally pleasant, though it can be quite chilly if it rains. Temperatures could range from the low 50s to the high 70s F. Rain showers are a possibility.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Whenever possible, we use modern, indoor restrooms, but public restrooms can be surprisingly scarce and participants who would like to make a comfort stop in nature may do so in many of the locations we visit.
- **OPTING OUT:** Where we are staying multiple days in the same lodging, participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day. This will not be possible on days when we are changing locations.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with one of the guides.

About the Birding Areas



The “**Middle**” Loire Valley, which stretches from Orleans in the east to Angers in the west, is home to the greatest concentration of the river’s famous chateaux. While much of the surrounding countryside is covered with the ubiquitous vineyards or other agricultural crops, a patchwork of other habitats – including stands of planted poplars, pine plantations, grassy pastures, ancient hedgerows and scrubby, overgrown fields – are interspersed throughout. Many species common to lowland France are found here. Mixed woodland should hold Eurasian Golden-Oriole, Eurasian Jay, European Goldfinch, Common Chaffinch, Great, Eurasian Blue, and Long-tailed tits, and dozens of purring European Turtle-Doves. Cirl Buntings, Common Whitethroats, and Common Nightingales will chortle from scruffy hedgerows, while Black Redstarts, European Stonechats, and Red-backed Shrikes hunt from tall weeds and shrub tops, and Eurasian Sparrowhawks and Common Kestrels hunt the field edges. Pine plantations should yield Crested Tit, Western Bonelli’s Warbler, and Firecrest, while older forests may hold Eurasian Bullfinch, Wood Warbler, and Hawfinch. Even urban areas should yield Eurasian Magpies, Eurasian Blackbirds, Common House-Martins and screaming flocks of Common Swifts.

The **Loire River**, which forms the backbone of the valley, runs roughly southwestward towards the Atlantic between Orleans and Angers. During the time of our tour, the river and its major regional tributaries (the **Cher**, the **Vienne** and the **Indre**) run shallow and slow, their placid currents interrupted by scattered gravel bars. These provide protected nesting areas for Black-headed, Yellow-legged, and Mediterranean gulls, Common and Little terns, Eurasian Thick-knee, Little Ringed Plover, and Common Sandpiper. Bank Swallows burrow in sandy banks, Common House-Martins and Barn Swallows nest under the bridges, and Cattle and Little egrets stalk the shallow edges.

The **Sologne** is a vast mosaic of heath, forest, marshland and scattered farmland, stretched over more than 1900 square miles on the eastern edge of the “Middle Loire”. Our explorations will focus on the area’s western edge, where a network of ponds riddle the landscape. Although these ponds seem natural, with well-established vegetation and a myriad of birds

in and around them, they were actually all man-made, centuries ago, in an attempt to drain the previously extensive swamplands – both for disease control, and to concentrate (and make it easier to capture) fish and waterfowl. The lakes provide important habitat for a variety of wading birds and waterfowl, including Gray and Purple herons, Great and Little egrets, Common Pochard and Tufted Duck, Great Crested, Eared, and Little grebes, and Eurasian Coot, while Whiskered Terns hover over the water and Reed Buntings sing challenges from the weedy edges.

The forests here are among the largest and oldest in this part of France, and the birdlife is correspondingly rich. Raptors abound here, with Short-toed Snake-Eagle, European Honey-Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, and Northern Goshawk (rare) all breeding in the area. The woodlands may yield Song Thrush, Eurasian Bullfinch, Eurasian Nuthatch, Spotted Flycatcher, and Blackcap, and several species of woodpecker are possible.

Like the Sologne, the landscape of the **Brenne** is studded with thousands of scattered, man-made ponds. Unlike that more northerly region, though, the Brenne's forests are generally short and somewhat depauperate, limited by the poor nutrients in its sandy soil. The resulting mix of scrub and grassland contains plant species more typical of areas further south in France, as is the case with a few of the birds we'll look for here. The plentiful ponds should give us more opportunities to enjoy the region's herons, egrets and gulls, plus the chance to connect with the handsome Red-crested Pochard and small numbers of shorebirds, possibly including Northern Lapwing, Black-winged Stilt, or Eurasian Curlew. Marshy pond edges should hold Cetti's, Eurasian Reed- and Sedge (and, if we're very lucky, Savi's or Great Reed) warblers, while brushy hedgerows bustle with Common Nightingale, Common Whitethroat, and Melodious Warbler. This region offers the best chance for Black Kites and the rare Black Stork.



*The magnificent Great Crested Grebe is one of the birds that will be breeding when we visit the Loire Valley. We'll have a chance to witness courtship displays as well as pairs with young ones in tow.
Photograph by participant Kim Nelson.*

Itinerary for France's Loire Valley: Birds, Chateaux & Wine

Day 1, Sun, Jun 1. Flights depart from the US.

Day 2, Mon, Jun 2. Arrival into Paris and transfer to Chinon. Once you've cleared customs and immigration, make your way to terminal 2D. We'll gather just outside the entrance to the Sheraton hotel at 1:30 p.m. Once we've got the group together, we'll depart for our hotel in Chinon, which is about a 4-hour drive away depending on traffic. We'll undoubtedly make a stop or two en route for restrooms, so be sure to have your binoculars handy, in case we find something interesting in the parking lot. After checking in, we'll head to dinner, where we'll discuss our plans for the next few days. Night at Hôtel Plantagenet in Chinon.

Day 3, Tue, Jun 3. Morning birding around Chinon, afternoon visit to Fontevraud Abbey. We'll meet for a 7:00 a.m. breakfast (after an optional pre-breakfast outing, for those who are interested), and then head out for a morning of birding west of town. The area surrounding Chinon is a mix of poplar groves and vineyards, with agricultural fields, scrubby growth and forest remnants interspersed – and, of course, the nearby Vienne and Loire rivers flowing past. There should be plenty to look for, with roving bands of tits (Great, Eurasian Blue, and Long-tailed), woodpeckers (Great Spotted and Eurasian Green), Eurasian Golden-Oriole, Common Chaffinch, Common Chiffchaff and purring Eurasian Turtle-Doves taking center stage. We'll make a series of short walks from our vehicles, walking along flat roads. Late in the morning, we'll make a stop above the handsome town of Candés, where we'll check for the spectacular Lizard and Fragrant orchids and look out over the confluence of the Loire and Vienne rivers.

Then we'll head on to Fontevraud, where we'll have lunch before visiting the immense Fontevraud Abbey. Governed by a succession of aristocratic abbesses for nearly 700 years, this was once among the largest abbeys in France. Among its treasures are the 16th-century chapter house paintings and painted effigies of four of the Plantagenets (including Richard the Lion-hearted) as well as an extraordinary kitchen smokehouse. We'll take a guided tour with a local historian who will explain the site and its significance. Black Redstarts and European Serins are regular here, and Common House-Martins nest under the eaves of many buildings. Night at Hôtel Plantagenet in Chinon.

Day 4, Wed, Jun 4. Pre-breakfast outing to Meron, morning birding around Chinon, afternoon visit to the vineyard of Pierre and Bertrand Couly. We'll offer an early morning outing to an area about 30 minutes south of Chinon before breakfast this morning, to look for some very special birds attracted to the dry agricultural lands there. The site is not an attractive one – dominated as it is by a huge industrial estate built on a former Nazi military base – but the birds don't seem to mind. Possibilities include Eurasian Skylark, Corn Bunting, European Stonechat, Red-legged Partridge, Eurasian Thick-knee, Red-backed Shrike, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, Hen, and Eurasian Marsh-harriers, and (if we're very lucky) Little Bustard. We'll return to our hotel for a late breakfast, then will spend the rest of our morning walking along a wooded track. This afternoon, we'll visit the Pierre and Bertrand Couly winery, where we'll have a guided walking tour of the vineyards (with an explanation of the importance of terroir), a visit to the wine-making chais, and a tasting of some of their wines (their specialty is Chinon), accompanied by regional specialties. Night at Hôtel Plantagenet in Chinon.



We will visit the vineyard and winery of Pierre and Bertrand Couly, where we will learn about terroir, and have a chance to sample some of their products. Photograph by guide Megan Edwards Crewe.

Day 5, Thu, Jun 5. Morning birding around Chinon, afternoon visit to Villandry. After breakfast today, we'll head east of Chinon to visit a more extensive area of forest, one with a significant pine component. Many wide dirt tracks run through the trees, and we'll walk along several of these, watching for Eurasian Nuthatch, Middle and Lesser Spotted

woodpeckers, Firecrest, Coal and Crested tits, Short-toed Treecreeper, European Greenfinch, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Tree Pipit, and more. The footing along some of the tracks may be a little rough, so be sure to bring a walking stick today if you use one.

In the afternoon, we'll visit Villandry, one of the last of the great Renaissance chateaux to be built on the Loire. Although the house contains a fine collection of furniture and paintings, Villandry is most famous for its spectacular gardens: a huge, formal kitchen garden at ground level, and a sprawling network of flower gardens built into a hillside overlooking the house. You'll have several hours to explore, aided by audio guides we'll rent at the site. Night at Hôtel Plantagenet in Chinon.



Western Bonelli's Warbler is a breeding bird in the forests around Chinon. Photograph by guide Marcelo Padua.

Day 6, Fri, Jun 6. Morning birding around Chinon, transfer to Cheverny, via the winery at Chateau Gaudrelle.

Today, we'll transfer to our next hotel near Cour-cheverny. But first, we'll bird our way north through Tours, crossing the Loire River to its north bank, where we'll visit Chateau Gaudrelle, a winery renowned for its Chenin Blanc varieties. Here, we'll have a short guided tour of the winery's fascinating cave system (where the wines are made and aged), followed by a lunch at a nearby bistro where we will sample a few of the wines from the touraine region of the Loire.

Later in the afternoon, we'll wend our way eastwards, stopping in the town of Chamont-sur-Loire to overlook the Loire River. Sandbars here provide protected nesting sites for a number of species, including Black-headed, Mediterranean and Yellow-legged gulls, Common and Little terns, Little Ringed Plover, and Common Sandpiper. From there, it's about 30 minutes to our hotel. Night at Le Prieuré de Boulogne Hotel.

Day 7, Sat, Jun 7. Morning birding grasslands near Chabris/Varennes-sur-Fouzon, afternoon visit to Chenonceau. This morning, we'll head south to Etang de l'Arche, situated in an agricultural area about 30 minutes south of Cour-Cheverny. an area bounded by the Cher River and the towns of Chabris and Varennes-sur-Fouzon. The grasslands and dry, fallow fields in this area are home to a declining suite of birds, including another small population of Little Bustards, Eurasian Skylark, European Stonechat, Yellowhammer, and Eurasian Thick-knee, with raptors including Common Kestrel and Common Buzzard present in good numbers.

Later in the morning, we'll start our way towards the fabulous Chenonceau, surely one of the prettiest of the Loire Valley's chateaux, for a guided tour with a local historian. The graceful Chenonceau straddles the River Cher, with the house on the north bank, and two long galleries – which once held magnificent feasts and balls – stretching across the river itself. Spared the terror and destruction of the French Revolution, thanks to the intervention of sympathetic local villagers, the house still contains much of its original furniture and furnishings. Night at Le Prieuré de Boulogne Hotel.

Day 8, Sun, Jun 8. La Brenne. Today, we'll spend a full day in the Brenne, a Regional Nature Park located about 90 minutes south of our hotel. The region is riddled with small lakes (created hundreds of years ago by the region's human residents), which hold a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds, terns and wading birds – possibly including the regionally rare Red-crested Pochard. Some largely southern birds edge as far north as this part of France, and we have our best chance of such species as Savi's Warbler, Eurasian Hoopoe, Black Kite, and Black-winged Stilt. We'll spend the day exploring the northern part of this extensive park, making a series of walks from our vehicles and stopping for lunch at a local *auberge*. For those who choose to stay behind today, the magnificent chateau of Cheverny is only a half mile or so from our hotel. Night at Le Prieuré de Boulogne Hotel.



The lakes of La Brenne and Sologne will be full of waterbirds such as this family of Mute Swans and their neighbors, Common Pochards and Eurasian Coots. Photograph by participant Maureen Harvey.

Day 9, Mon, Jun 9. Morning birding at ponds of western Sologne, afternoon visit to Chambord. This morning, we'll head east, to the western edges of the Sologne. Our target here is a string of ponds scattered among fields and forest; most are only visible from road edges, but we'll make a stop at the Etang de Beaumont, a 35-hectare reserve with a comfortable viewing blind and Etang de Malzone, an even larger reserve with several viewing areas. The region's many ponds attract a host of waterbirds, including Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Purple Heron, Great Crested, Eared and Little grebes, Common Moorhen and Eurasian Coot, while Whiskered Tern and Osprey hunt overhead, and Eurasian Reed-Warblers flit through waterside vegetation. The surrounding forests may yield Common Cuckoo, Tree Pipit, Middle Spotted Woodpecker, European Robin, Song Thrush, and Hawfinch.

After lunch, we'll move on to Chambord, largest of the Loire's chateaux, with 440 rooms that could accommodate a staggering 2000 people! Its more than 80 flights of stairs includes an intriguing double spiral designed by Leonardo da Vinci. Conceived by King Francois I, the house took 1800 workers some 28 years to build – and the monarch stayed there a grand total of 72 days. Assisted by audio guides we'll rent at the site, we'll have plenty of time to explore those parts of the massive building which are open to the public, including many rooms restored to their former splendor. Night at Le Prieuré de Boulogne Hotel.

Day 10, Tue, Jun 10. Morning birding at Etang de l'Arche, afternoon transfer to Paris. We'll have one final morning in the western Sologne, where we'll walk a lovely, wooded track near the hamlet of Marcilly-en-Gault. Woodland species, including European Bullfinch, Wood Warbler, Marsh Tit, and Black and Lesser Spotted woodpeckers are possible, and we'll keep an ear out for the amazing song of the Common Nightingale. After lunch back in Cour-Cheverny, we'll head to our hotel near the Charles de Gaulle airport, where we'll have our final dinner. The drive should take about 3 hours. Night at Marriott Charles de Gaulle.

Day 11, Wed, Jun 11. Departure from France. You may schedule your departure for any time today. *Bon voyage!*

About Your Guides

Marcelo Padua was born in Belem at the mouth of the Amazon River. Growing up he spent his free time at his uncle's farm in an Amazon rainforest reserve observing everything from insects to mammals and birds. Marcelo began studying English at an early age and attended high school in Middletown, Pennsylvania, in a student-exchange program. He is remarkably fluent and even taught English for a couple of years back home in Brazil.

Following university in Rio de Janeiro, Marcelo transferred to law school in Cuiaba, but working as an English-speaking naturalist guide during school holidays soon made it clear to him that birding was much more than a hobby! With just a year to go until his bar exam, he turned his back on the law to hang out his shingle as a birding guide. He met Bret Whitney in 2005 and embarked on a full-time guiding career with Field Guides in 2010. With his great sense of humor, impeccable organizational skills, and love of seeing birds, Marcelo has quickly become a reference for birding in Brazil, spending over 200 days each year in the field. A warning: Watch out if he sees displaying manakins of any kind! Marcelo makes his nest at the crossroads of the Pantanal and the Amazon in Cuiaba with his wife, Ana.

“Marcelo Padua has incredible eyes, ears, and memory—the best birding (and mammals) guide I have ever experienced. His ability to instantly hear distant birds and recognize birds in flight and their movements in the forest was amazing. He gave us 110% in skill, patience, and kindness.”
D. H. Jaguar Spotting

A second tour leader will be added as tour size warrants.

You may visit <https://fieldguides.com/our-staff/> for complete tour schedules our guides; just click on their photos.

Financial Information

FEE: \$5775 from Paris

DEPOSIT: \$575 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: December 3, 2024

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (Optional): \$1100

LIMIT: 12

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Ruth Kuhl. Ruth will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations are comfortable throughout the trip, though rooms are cozy in typical European fashion. All rooms have en-suite bathrooms.

DOCUMENTS: A current passport valid three months beyond the date of your return is necessary for US citizens to enter France. However, we recommend that your passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond the dates of your visit, as regulations vary from country to country, and are subject to change. If you are not a US citizen, please check with the French consulate nearest you for entry requirements. Information about consulates and entry requirements is generally available online, or you can contact us and we will be happy to look this up for you. Passports should have an adequate number of blank pages for the entire journey. Some countries require a blank page for their stamp, so as a precaution it is best to have one blank page per country you will visit or transit.

Starting in the first half of 2025 (no specific date provided by the EU), travelers from visa-exempt countries will be required to have a travel authorization (ETIAS) to enter most European countries (including France). For more information, please go to the following link: https://travel-europe.europa.eu/etias_en. It is recommended to secure this before booking flights or lodging, so please be sure to complete this well in advance. Your travel authorization is linked to your passport and is valid for three years or until your passport expires, whichever comes first.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: When departing from the US, an overnight flight will be necessary.

Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees. **Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.**

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and may charge additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify its policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights will be the client's responsibility.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **tour fee** is \$5775 for one person in double occupancy from Paris. It includes all lodging from Day 2 through Day 10, all meals from dinner on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 11, all ground transportation, entrance fees, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping for hotel staff and restaurant staff is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any hotel staff for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to give an additional tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does not include your airfare to Paris, airport taxes, visa fees, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any alcoholic beverages other than wine tastings included in the tour, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is \$1100. If you do not have a roommate but wish to share, we will try to pair you with a roommate from the tour; but if none is available, you will be billed for the single supplement. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

TOUR LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact us at fieldguides.com/contact-us/. Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$575** per person, or see or see <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/> for our Payment Options. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 180 days prior to departure, or **by December 3, 2024**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 180 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and full payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 180 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 179 and 90 days before the departure date, 50% of the full tour fee is non-refundable, which would include the full deposit if the final payment has not yet been paid. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable and non-transferable.

Our cancellation policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of that insurance is

not refundable, so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airline's restrictions.

The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure. In most such cases, full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. Note this exception, however: If you have been advised pre-tour that there is a non-refundable portion of your tour fee no matter the reason for Field Guides cancellation of the tour, that portion will not be refunded. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs outside of our cancellation policy as published in the itinerary (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for

the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

NCP 7/2020

MP 10/23

MZ 10/24

RK 10/24; peg 10/24-updated